



MERCURY.



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DEVOTED TO
 THE STUDY OF THEOSOPHY, ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHY,
 THE OCCULT SCIENCES AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.
 ISSUED MONTHLY.

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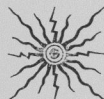
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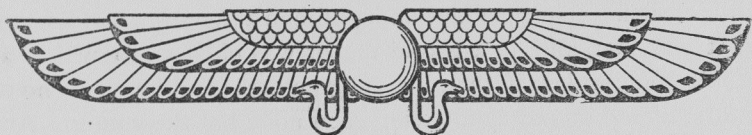
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SORROW AND EVIL, THEIR CAUSE AND CURE.*

There is an ancient story familiar probably to most of you, the story of the eastern prince brought up in luxury and defended from all touch of the sorrows and evils of the world, brought up amidst surroundings that were fair, that in every respect were full of joy and delight, where nothing was allowed to intrude that was old, or diseased or that could suggest sorrow and decay. Kept continually within a palace and its surrounding gardens, where everything was drawn together that could delight the senses, that could charm the mind, that could in any way rouse and delight the emotions, this boy grew into youth and from youth into manhood with never a ruffle of sorrow in his life or within his knowledge. Wedded while still young, with one child born to him by his wife, the cup of human joy seemed full, and there stretched before him an existence of power, of pomp and of delight; an existence with every promise that the world could give, with everything threatening and evil carefully warded away; and yet within the heart of that prince there were strange stirrings from time to time, strange stirrings of the outer world which had not yet reached him in any of its rougher aspects.

Upon going out into the city one day, driven by his charioteer,

* A Lecture by MRS. ANNIE BESANT, specially reported for the Progressive Thinker, Chicago, by A. M. Griffin.

while near his friend he met an aged man tottering, and he asked what was that, and he was told that it was old age, to which all people come at last if they live long enough; and he went home and pondered on old age, having seen none but the young. And another day when he drove out he met a man who was leprous and miserable and he asked what was that, and he was told it was disease which struck many a one in his prime and reduced him to physical misery ere yet he was old; and he went back and he thought of disease; he had seen nothing but health. Another day going out he met a corpse that was being carried along, and he asked what was that, and he was told it was death, death that came to every one—man, woman and child.

And the heart of the prince was sad within him, and he pondered on old age, disease and death, and heavier and heavier grew his heart as he knew that these sorrows pressed on the outer world.

One other sight he saw that also was strange. A man who was poor, who was aged, but who yet was happy; a man who possessed nothing, but still was glad; a man who was aged but yet was bright; a man who looked as though he ought to be sorrowful, but who was calm and serene exceedingly; and when he asked about that man, the answer came that he was a man who had renounced everything and lived in the light of an eternal life; and the prince went back and brooded awhile on that, on the man who although he lived in the world and was old and poor, was yet happy and at peace; and as he brooded the sorrow of the world flooded over his heart and well nigh broke it, and he grew weary of palace and of beauty, weary of delights and of music, weary of all that had made his life so glad, and of the youth and of the beauty and the health that stood in such strange contrast with the outer world of which he had caught a glimpse.

And at last his heart being so weary he decided to go out from the palace and the gardens, and to search for the reason of the world's sorrow, and whether or not some cure for sorrow might be found; and rising while wife and child were sleeping, he bent over them in farewell and vowed within his sad and heavy heart that he would never again look on the faces that he loved until he had found the reason of the world's sorrow and its cure; and he left the palace in the night time with sleeping wife and sleep-

ing child, and he went out beyond the boundaries of the city and cut off the long hair of the prince and put off the robes of the prince and sent back the steed of the prince in the care of his charioteer, and he put on the garb of the mendicant and went out barefoot and alone into the world, to understand sorrow, its cause and its end; and he sought it first in philosophy and he spent his days in bitter ascetism; he struggled with his body and well nigh brought it to death.

But for all his vigils and his fastings, for all his thinking and his struggling, he failed to find the reason of the world's sorrow, much less to find its cure.

And so he left the ascetics, with whom for a time he had harbored, and went on again alone into the wilderness, and alone he stayed for awhile, searching deep in his own heart, searching deep in the heart of nature around him, and at last he sat down beneath a tree and the inspiration that long had been brooding over him came rushing in upon his heart and the light within him began to dawn, and he resolved to sit there meditating until the eyes of the spirit should open and the world's sorrow and its cure and its ending should be seen. And he sat for many a day and many a night beneath the tree meditating on sorrow and on evil, and meditating on their causes and their cure, until the illumination came down upon him, until the eyes of the spirit were open within him, until he saw the roots of the world's sorrow, and seeing the cause saw also the cure and the end.

And then in great joy he entered into Nirvâna, and in Nirvâna he abode for seven days and nights, and then coming back he brought with him the knowledge he had sought and went forth to give that knowledge again to the world

And you know that in telling again that ancient story I have told the story of the prince who became the Buddha and who for many and many a long year wandered over the plains and through the villages of India teaching of the world's sorrow and its cause and its ending, beginning his preaching as you know at the ancient city, the city of Varanasi, now called Benares, and there first proclaims what he had seen, the secret of the old days reproclaimed, the secret of the past once more given to the world, that which sages had learned, that which teachers had taught, but that which every great teacher learns again for himself in all its

fullness, in all its extent, for only that which a man learns for himself can be spoken to the world with the strength that comes from knowledge, and every one who would be a world's saviour must tread the path alone, must alone work out his knowledge, win his illumination. There is none that can do for the human soul that supreme task; which is the union of the soul with the spirit, and every saviour of the world accomplishes for himself that union and then comes back to the world with his message and speaks it to all who have ears to hear.

And the Buddha taught again the ancient lesson, the lesson that we are going to retrace in its broad outlines to-night and see whether in the nineteenth century we can so realize the truth that he found and taught as to make it a practical truth for our daily living, which shall make our lives the easier to bear, which shall make sorrow easier to face, which shall point us to its ending and enable us to solve the riddle of the world. For each one who even partially solves that riddle, who even intellectually can grasp that teaching makes by the intellectual knowledge a sign post, as it were, showing him the road to the real solution, the solution that comes not by the intellect, but by that which is above the intellect, and which changes into the deepest conviction of the soul that which first the intellect rationally and intelligently recognized.

Now, the very essence of the teaching is easily put. Let me state it first and then work it out more in detail.

Two great principles we have to grasp; first, the principle of evolution both of life and of form. That must be one thing to study and to understand. Then, the principle that man is ever seeking happiness and seeks that happiness by uniting himself to the object of his desire; that all the world is seeking happiness, every heart is pursuing it. Each seeks it in his own way; each tries to find it after his own fashion; but it is a universal truth of human experience that the heart is seeking for happiness, and you will recognize if you think a moment the truth of the further statement that every one seeks happiness by uniting himself to the object which he believes will give him the happiness that he seeks.

Those then are the two fundamental principles, following which we shall find the cause of sorrow clear and the ending of sorrow clear; following which we shall understand what is meant

by evil, how it arises and what is its ending. Along these lines I shall try to take you, taking them up in turn and showing you whither they lead us.

Let us first take up this question of evolution, a double evolution of life and forms. Science of course recognizes the evolution of forms. That has been the great study of our own days, and you know how wonderfully illuminative that study has proved to be. Think how the world's thoughts has changed since Charles Darwin first wrote on evolution; how the principle that he then proclaimed has permeated every region of thought; how it has been introduced into history; how it has been introduced into economics; how it has been taken as a clew in all the tangled webs of human life and human thought. Only by going back to the intellectual world before this idea was largely accepted can you realize the change that has come over thought by that illuminating idea of evolution. But it has chiefly been an evolution of forms. Science is always dealing with forms, the things it can see, that it can look at from the outside, that it can break in pieces, that it can dissect out bit by bit, that it can test with its chemical re-agents, that it can weigh in its delicate balances. Everything is the world of form with which science has been dealing these many years, and science has shown us the world as a place where forms are continually breaking up. Forms are always changing; one form gives place to another; death as natural as life; a form comes and is born, it grows to maturity, it begins to decay, it perishes; it cannot be destroyed so far as the material is concerned, but as a form it perishes; the material of which it was made goes on to make other forms. The breaking up by death is a preliminary to a higher building, and science shows us continually that without death there would be stagnation, without death there could be no growth. If it were not for death we should have no animals to-day but those animals whose monstrous forms we find in the ancient deposits come down from the highest antiquity. If they had not perished, if they had not been broken up, how could the fairer, the more beautiful, the more finished forms have come into existence?

Take a few fishes from the Silurian ocean, take a few of those vast creatures that roamed over vast bogs and that trampled through mighty forests when the world was young; place these

beside the creatures of our own day and see how vast the difference, how grace replaced clumsiness, delicacy has replaced grossness, agility has replaced clumsy strength. Everything in form has evolved, and without breaking up of forms that could not have been; without the destruction of forms there would have been a universal stagnation, and to day nature would still be struggling with those monstrous forms of the past; but the merciful hand of death everywhere triumphant has broken them one after an other, and the material that built them has been reformed into fairer shapes, and the world has grown more beautiful as millennium has succeeded millennium.

Science studying this evolution of forms has carried us at least to this point: We see the value of death; we see the value of destruction. If it were not for the destructive agency in nature there could be no growth. If it were not for the breaking down of forms there could be no evolution.

And so the Divine Life has been symbolized in two great aspects, the life that forms and the life that destroys; the constructive and the destructive forces in nature, both equally divine, both equally necessary, both wanted for the progress of the world. If either disappear stagnation would result. If either vanished, growth would no longer be possible; and the first ray of light breaks upon the darkness when we recognize that God is as much in destructive agencies as in constructive, as much in the action of death as in that of life, as much in the breaking into pieces as in the building up. Nay, that there is no such thing as death but only continual rebirth, and that death is a stage in growth and in evolution. It is transformation and it is nothing worse than that.

But more than this we need to know. We recognize even in looking at the forms, that their breaking up is necessary, but when we turn to look at the evolution of life instead of the evolution of forms, then indeed does the obscurity quickly vanish away, for we find that these forms we have been watching, that have been born, and have been broken up, that have developed, and have been destroyed—that all these forms as they perish hand in their results to the life which is within them; that the form after all is nothing more than the mere material coating in which the life was veiled; that the form has only its importance because it is the ex-

pression of that life; that the life is always going on from form to form, and that the reason that the form breaks is because the life has grown too strong for it, too large for it, too complicated for it, and this growing and developing life bursts the form in pieces the moment it needs a fresh form for its better expression, and the life continues unbroken and is ever building itself fresh form after form.

So that looking at evolution from the inner side instead of from the outer state, the evolving life instead of the evolving form, we see in that evolving life a mighty plan, a divine purpose, a gigantic evolution; we see the mighty oversoul, to borrow an expression from Emerson—we see the Oversoul brooding over the ocean of matter, and as the Oversoul sends down its rays, which are itself, into that ocean of matter the matter clothes each ray, as it were, and gives it shape in the lower world; and as the Oversoul pours down ever more life into each ray, that ray bursts the forms asunder and attracts a fresh form more complicated and able to express more of the inpouring life. And looking at it in this way all nature becomes full of a scene of joy inexpressible, and instead of breaking forms, instead of disintegrating shapes, instead of the shattered creatures, that we saw looking at the world of forms, we see an ever extending life, an ever growing thought, an ever increasing consciousness, immortal youth and life unchanging but ever widening out and extending its wondrous flow, so that in the world of matter form after form more wonderful is made, shape after shape more exquisite appears, until at last we see these rays of the Oversoul that have been dividing over and over again and ever expressing more and more of the source whence they come; we see them, as it were, coming at last into individual existence, clothed in the form of man, building the human soul and down into that soul again, an outflow from the Godhead, the spirit coming down to inhabit the receptacle made for it by evolution, and the progress of individualized man taking its beginning in our earth. And realizing this vast evolution of life and that every form hands in to the life that is within it the results of its experiences and thus brings out from the responding life ever more and more of the music that lies silent within it—realizing that, we begin to understand a little more of one part of the world's sorrow that comes from death and this evil that we connect

with the idea of separation, and so far as those phenomena are concerned we find ourselves no longer puzzled and confused, for if death is only of the form and the life goes on unchecked, if the form is only destroyed when it is outworn and its purpose is over and the life is ever clothing itself again and again in ever higher and higher forms, then all that destructive side in the world which looks so wonderful at once becomes pregnant with joy, for we no longer trouble as to the form that perishes; for we know that the life is eternal, that in the evolution of that life is the promise of the perfection of the world.

So far we feel ourselves on firm ground. We have swept out of sight as evils death and the steps that lead up to it, for the decay that precedes death is simply the gradual breaking up of the form; and so far as nature is concerned, untouched by man, life might pass in that way in the form until the use of the form is over, until it is gradually outworn and drops away from the upspringing life.

But we know that there is more than that in the sorrow and in the evil that we see around us; that there other forms of sorrow than those caused by death or by decay, and evil does not seem susceptible of so easy an answer as that it is merely a passing incident, as it were, in the evolution of life.

Let us look a little more closely into evil and see whether we can find also its cause and its ending. Let us think of a soul individually just beginning its life experience—not the soul as we know it now, coming into the world with great mental and moral faculties characterizing it as with the children that are born to us to-day; but let us look backward into the past, take the soul in its germinal condition just when the outflow of Divine Life had come into the receptacle built for it by evolving life in the sub-human conditions, and let us try to realize what would be the state of such a soul when first it begins its individual experience. It is a mere germ, a mere seed, a mere beginning of a soul, nothing in fact that you would call a soul, any more than you would call an acorn an oak tree—a spark from the Divine thrown out from the Divine Life in order that it may develop into a mighty flame; a drop of the divine ocean thrown out into the receptacle prepared for it that it may continually increase until it itself becomes an ocean; a life, but a life in germ; a life with all possibilities within

it and with nothing showing externally; a life exactly in the sense that there is a life within the nucleus of the growing cell in the plant or in the animal with no more resemblance to the full-grown individual than the tiny speck of protoplasm is like the full-grown plant, the full-grown animal or the full-grown man, and yet that speck of protoplasm will develop into plant or animal or man, just according to its progenitor. So with this tiny germ of a human soul. It is the life of God, and although there is no likeness there to the divine when it comes forth as a spark from the flame, it has everything within it that will make it develop into the divine image until according to the command of Christ to his disciples it is perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. But at first a germ, a spark, an embryo. To that embryonic soul there is neither good nor evil, only experience; around it all sorts of possibilities; nature stretches out her hands full of gifts of every kind, stretches them out full of things that give joy and things that give pain, of things that will give delight and others that will cause sorrow. Her hands are full of every gift, and this embryonic life is ignorant and knows nothing of the result of the taking. How shall it learn? A great problem has to be solved. To develop that human soul as machine were easy; to develop it into an automaton were easy; to develop it without any knowledge of good and evil but ever going right by a divine compulsion, that were easy. But then it would never grow into the image of its Father; then it would never develop divine knowledge and divine power.

(To be continued.)

THE RELIGIOUS MISSION OF THEOSOPHY.

[A LECTURE BY PROFESSOR JOHN MACKENZIE, SPOKANE, WASH.]

"We are at the beginning of a vast change in the basis and modes of thought upon man; a change far more striking than that accomplished by Copernicus and Galileo, when they substituted for a universe in which sun and planets revolved about the earth, a universe in which the earth is but the merest grain or atom revolving with other worlds, larger and smaller about the sun, and all these forming but one among innumerable systems."

"Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom,"

By Andrew Dickson White.

There is at the present day a serious realization in the minds of a great many thinking people of the inadequacy of Christianity in its orthodox form to satisfy the wants of their religious nature. This dissatisfaction can no longer be called by the old

fashioned names of infidelity or scepticism ; it does not spring from any negative tendency, or from the desire to disregard or destroy existing faiths, but it arises largely from the deeply settled conviction that there is disagreement somewhere between the religious doctrines as presented by the orthodox churches, and the fundamental principles of religious and scientific truth. The unparalleled advances of the natural sciences in the last half of the century have thrown a most powerful light upon the universe, and have well nigh revolutionized our conceptions of nature and man. In the face of the great discoveries of modern science orthodox theology to-day stands absolutely impotent. Dogmatic theology now sees the springs of its inspiration running dry. It stands to-day as a thing apart, as the great exception to the grand and beautiful unity which science shows us in the universe around us.

It was this realization that orthodox religion was the great exception to the grand unity of nature which science teaches that led Professor Henry Drummond to write his "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," thinking that thereby he might contribute something to bring religion within the sphere of law and scientific certitude, and effect some sort of reconciliation between science and orthodox theology.

Dissatisfaction exists not only among those who have been led to quarrel with religion altogether, but in many of the most profoundly religious minds of the age. The contemplative and serious Matthew Arnold said: "At the present moment there are two things about the christian religion which must be obvious to every percipient person ; one, that men cannot do without it, the other that they cannot do with it as it is." And Jacob Gould Schuman, President of Cornell University, in his recent article on "Agnosticism and Religion," says: "For him who has eyes to see, the religion of dogma lies exhausted on the field." According to George Henry Lewes, religion is advancing to one or either of two conditions, complete extinction or transformation; and Professor Joseph Le Conte, in his recent work "Evolution in its Relation to Religious Thoughts," says: "There can be no doubt that we are now on the eve of a great revolution. To many, both friends and foes of christianity, evolution seems to sweep away the whole foundation, not only of christianity, but of all religion and morals by demonstrating a universal materialism."

It would not be difficult to find a great many more of our representative thinkers giving expression to similar opinions. Commenting on this grave fact, Professor Henry Drummond said: "No one who knows the content of christianity, or feels the universal need of a religion, can stand idly by while the intellect of his age is slowly divorcing itself from it." Yes, a return to christianity is needed, but it strikes me that the church will have quite as much of a journey to go as the world, so far as her methods are concerned.

Now, the reason for all this is not difficult to find. Man possesses an intellectual as well as a devotional nature, and under the spur of the scientific investigations and analysis of the last half century, the intellect of western races has taken a prodigious stride, which has not been accompanied by a corresponding advance in the presentation of religious truth. Since the doctrines of orthodox theology were formulated by the church fathers some centuries ago nature has been investigated, and science has given to man many new conceptions of the universe around him, and of his place therein. Geology and biology have taught man the theory of evolution. The theory of evolution teaches man that the world and all the things therein contained were not flung from the hand of the creator in their present state, but that they are the result of a gradual development or unfolding through millions of years according to certain laws; that the universe and all the things therein contained are constantly undergoing change, and that the present state of things is the outcome of progress through preceding states; that the world therefore, since the date of its beginning has not remained in a fixed and unchanged condition. Then again science has given to man the great conception of law, with the conception of law came a knowledge of cause and effect, antecedent and consequent; man then began to realize that nothing occurs by chance, but that every event which occurs in the world around him, no matter how great or how small it may be, occurs as the effect of a certain cause which has preceded it; that every cause has its effect, and every effect its cause.

Now, I say, that when man realizes these great conceptions of law and evolution, and what they imply, he is no longer satisfied with the arbitrary conceptions of nature which orthodox theology furnishes. The continual adjustments and readjustments which

orthodox theology is making to conform with the fluctuations of scientific speculation carry home to us the conviction that orthodox theology is playing second fiddle to science. It has long ago ceased to be the custodian of natural truth, so that in the world of nature, the light of the church has become utterly extinguished, and it is also becoming extinguished in the world of spirit.

There is another reason for the decadence of orthodox theology as a power in the souls of men. In all the great religions of the world, we find that there exists the esoteric and the exoteric, the internal and the external truth. The esoteric or internal truth is the source or fountain head, from which flows life and meaning into the external forms. When this current ceases to flow from the internal to the external, then the external becomes a mere shell without vitality; it dies; the form loses its meaning when the inner truth departs. It is the same with the human body itself. When the inner, invisible currents cease to circulate in the human system, the body dies and decays, and it is then good for nothing but to be buried. In the study of the history of religions, we often come across this law of degeneration of spiritual truth in the minds of men. The great esoteric doctrines which enthroned christianity in the hearts and souls of men no longer exist. In our orthodox churches to-day a true doctrinal sermon is seldom or never preached. In the place of the true spiritual doctrines we find a mass of dry, lifeless ritual, empty shells, or no doctrines at all, but mere musical entertainments and sensational discourses. Like owls sitting on the limb of an old tree, our ministers still hoot the hoots that have been hooted for centuries.

Now, it is at junctures such as these that the great spiritual teachers of humanity come to restore to the hearts and souls of men the spiritual truths which they have lost. Such men were Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ and numerous other saviours who illuminate the history of the race. These great spiritual teachers enunciated nothing radically new. They were reformers, not innovators, and their mission consisted in calling men back to the fountain of spiritual truth from which they had wandered, and in infusing spiritual life and meaning to the great exoteric symbols which persist through all degenerative religious changes. This is the radical defect in christianity to-day, namely, that its exoteric doctrines and symbols have lost their inner or esoteric meaning.

It is this defection in christianity which accounts for the fact that the great intellects of this age are found outside its pale. In exoteric christianity there is nothing left to attract or delight the philosophic intellect. There may still be enough in it to satisfy the simple and unphilosophic mind of a large portion of the uneducated masses, but the philosopher or thinker can find nothing in it at all comparable in grandeur and beauty with the great conceptions and generalizations which modern science brings to its students. One would naturally think that religion ought to supply the mind of man with the grandest and most comprehensive truths, and so it should, but this is not the case to-day with theology in its orthodox form, and unless the church inaugurates a radical change in its method of presentation of religious truth, and restores spiritual vitality to its exoteric symbols and doctrines, we can only predict that it will continue to divorce a larger and larger number of the more educated classes and independent thinkers from its power and influence.

Now, theosophy comes to supply the spiritual meaning, the esoteric or inner truth to the exoteric or external doctrines or symbolical forms of christianity, thus giving to religion once more a truly divine sanction, and to ethics a truly spiritual basis, and to the philosophic mind a philosophy of life and being so vast and deep that the most profound and analytical intellect finds solace and delight in contemplating its profound truths, and exploring its mysterious recesses. To the simple and uncultured mind, it also furnishes truths fit for everyday use. To the weary traveler through the vale of life it furnishes a strong staff to lean upon, to the sick and sorrowing it brings consolation and hope, and to the dying it brings positive assurance of a life beyond the grave. It furnishes a philosophy to science, whereby scientific truth finds an ultimate meaning. It proves the unity of nature and spirit, showing that the universe does not consist of two departments,—nature and the supernatural,—but that the whole universe is a unity,—that there is no arbitrary division between the natural and spiritual, but that the natural is the spiritual and the spiritual is the natural, and that man himself is a combination of both. Theosophy furnishes the philosophy of this grand unity, and restores to man the consciousness of his great spiritual heritage, which for ages has been lost in the desert wastes of superstition

and fancy.

One great defect in orthodox theology is its utter lack of anything like a true psychology, or a science of the soul. Theology simply classifies man into the three divisions of St. Paul,—body, soul and spirit, but beyond this mere verbal classification, it does not furnish any rational explanation or science on the subject. To orthodox theology the solution of the problem of the origin and nature of the soul of man is as far away as ever. We may say indeed that science and philosophy have made the same failure. In recent years, however, science, under the name of the "new psychology" is making great strides toward a solution of this great problem, and is throwing much light on the nature of the human soul. As the business of theology is to expound the relations of the soul to God, one would naturally think that its first and most important duty would be to possess a science of the soul which would deal with the laws of its origin, nature and life, but such is not the case. Orthodox theology is absolutely barren, so far as a psychology, or a science of the soul is concerned.

Now, one of the chief objects of theosophy is to supply this great want. To furnish a science of the soul is one of its greatest missions. The second volume of the "Secret Doctrine," Madam Blavatsky's greatest work, deals with anthropogenesis, with the origin and nature of man, and here are laid down the laws of soul origin and evolution. We have heard of the evolution of man's bodily form upwards. The western world gives Darwin the credit for being the first who worked out this theory. In like manner, Blavatsky has been the means of communicating to the western world the theory of soul evolution by reincarnation. Theosophy postulates the great doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, and its evolution by reincarnation. This great doctrine of reincarnation was believed in by the early church, and it is easy to trace it in the teachings of Jesus. But it, along with other great esoteric truths, has dropped out of orthodox theology, and in its place has been put most arbitrary and unscientific conceptions. The orthodox conception of the creation of the soul at birth is most false and misleading. "Eastern philosophy rejects the western theological dogma of a newly created soul for every baby born, a dogma, as unphilosophical as it is impossible in the

economy of nature." Science leads us to believe, by the great principle of conservation which it has established, that something cannot be created out of nothing. *Ex nihil, nihil fit*, is a fundamental law of the universe. And so we know that the human soul was in existence before the birth of the body; yes, it has been forever in existence; we know that it has an immortal past behind it, as well as an immortal future before it. As the poet says:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises in us, our life's star,
Hath elsewhere had its setting,
And cometh from afar."

The spiritual part of man, the soul essence is immortal in its nature; it is a ray from the supreme divine essence, the infinite source of all being, and it was no more brought into existence for the first time at birth, than the matter composing my body was brought into existence for the first time in my mother's womb. This doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul is no arbitrary or new fangled one. It is as old as the human race; it is the prevailing doctrine of all the great religious races of the east,—those races to whom we in the west owe all the religions we possess. As the sun of the natural world rises in the east and proceeds westwardly, so the spiritual sun which illuminates the soul of man, rises in the east and proceeds westwardly. Long, long before western civilization even had its beginnings, modern research has discovered that far back in the mists of antiquity the oriental races possessed a great system of spiritual philosophy, in which the central doctrines were pre-existence and reincarnation of the soul. These great doctrines were taught in all the great ancient mysteries. With all our progress in material civilization, we in the west have failed to produce a single system of spiritual philosophy or religion. All that we possess in this direction we have borrowed from the east. We cannot therefore very well afford to ignore the central doctrine of eastern systems, simply because in its transition downwards through the ages, it has become lost to us, and now that it is rediscovered, appears to be unfamiliar to our so-called western orthodoxy. If my soul has come into existence at the birth of my body, then it is strictly logical to suppose that at the death of my body, it will cease to exist; that which has its origin in time must in time come to an end.

Then again, consider the doctrine of reincarnation as the method of soul evolution in contradistinction to the orthodox theory of soul evolution. Our theology teaches that the experiences of one short life are sufficient to settle our destiny for an eternity in the future. According to this conception, the life of the human soul is divided into two periods; one, a temporary career on earth of 60 or 70 years at most, and the other a whole eternity, and this short temporary period is represented as being adequate to prepare the soul for this eternity. The soul may pass its eternal future existence in either of two places, in heaven or in hell, in eternal bliss or in eternal woe, and the short earthly career is supposed to be sufficient to seal the soul's destiny forever in one or other of these places. Only one chance is given, no matter under what circumstances a soul may be born into the world. The soul that is born into the most abject surroundings, with everything against it in the struggle of life, through no fault of its own, is supposed to start from the same point as the soul that is born in the midst of a favorable environment, with everything to ease its path and advance its progress. To make this theory appear at all reasonable there should be absolute uniformity in our social conditions, so that everyone would start at the same toe mark; but as this is not the case, then the only legitimate inference is that the Christian God is unjust in his nature or limited in his power, or both. As orthodox theology, however, will not admit either of these conclusions, we must conclude that this theory of life, or soul evolution, which orthodoxy presents, is false in its nature, and in fact absurd. Inasmuch, also, as it postulates that a large number of souls are destined to an eternity of woe, and are therefore to be classed as "failures," the number of the elect being limited, we must conclude that the method of God which theology presents is a failure, for the universe, having been, according to this theory, created for man, and man's perfection being the ultimate object of creation, then, inasmuch, as there will exist a large class outside of the elect, who will remain imperfect throughout eternity, the scheme of creation will fail of its object and there will forever exist a vast discord in the universe which nullifies the whole scheme of absolute and final universal harmony.

Now, theosophy has come to restore to man the true theory of

soul evolution. This is found in the great doctrine of reincarnation. Consider this doctrine in contradistinction to the arbitrary doctrine of orthodox theology outlined above, and then decide which is the more rational and true to the nature of things. I am not now going to endeavor to demonstrate the truth of reincarnation. I believe, however, that science can to-day almost demonstrate it. It seems to be the necessary corollary from recent scientific investigations and analysis. Outside of the fact that the reincarnation of the soul has been taught by every great religion, the theory has received the support of nearly all the great philosophers and poets of the west, and is treated with profound respect by the best intellects of the present age. There is nothing in nature against it; indeed, as Huxley stated, the analogy of nature is in its favor. Besides there is a large number of people, members of the theosophical society and others, who can see and remember their previous lives, and who from their own knowledge are convinced of its truth. This great doctrine postulates the method of soul evolution. Theosophy asserts that the soul of man has evolved as well as his body. If the bodily form of man has evolved upwards in the cosmic process through vast periods of time, extending over millions of years, surely the soul of man, which is by far his most important part, and is indeed the true man, has also taken countless ages to come to its present perfection. Indeed, James Freeman Clark, in his "Ten Great Religions" states that some method of soul evolution such as this will be necessary as a compliment to the Darwinian evolution of his bodily form, and that it will be the duty of theology to examine this question anew in accordance with our changed conceptions of things. Geology has now made our minds familiar with the vast extent of time during which the processes of nature have been slowly and steadily operating; and when we consider this question in its proper light, we shall come to the conclusion that the mind and soul of man has taken countless aeons to evolve, and that it will be countless aeons yet before it reaches the stature of the perfect man.

It is important to get a clear idea of what it is that reincarnates in man. As is well known, theosophy divides man into seven principles. The lowest four of these principles are the material body, which we see; the ethereal body, which is the mould upon which the material body is built, atom by atom, and in

which the nervous system resides; the principle of vitality, or physical life; and the principle of desire and passion. These four lower principles are mortal in their nature; they are also common to the animals below man; at death those four lower principles disintegrate and lose their individuality, dissolving back into the respective planes from which they aggregated to form the individual,—the material body going back to the material plane, the ethereal body to the ethereal plane, the vital principle to the plane of life, and the body of passion and desire disintegrating in Kâma Loca, or the plane of desire. But in addition to these four lower principles, man possesses a fifth principle, called the Manas, or Mind principle, and also a sixth, called the Buddhic principle, and a seventh, called the Atma principle. The Atma principle is a ray of the pure divine essence, the Buddhic principle is the vehicle of that ray, or the medium which unites the pure spirit with the Manas or Mind, or rational man. Now these three higher principles,—the Atma, the Buddhi and the Manas, form the higher trinity in man, and they together form the reincarnating ego in man. This ego is the immortal part of man, and at the death of the body it does not suffer disintegration, but persists as an individuality on the higher planes of the universe for a certain period before a succeeding incarnation. This is the ego or soul of man, which persists through successive incarnations, and which evolves in the great process of spiritual evolution. This is the spiritual part of man, which at each successive incarnation, dips down into matter, and by earth life experiences, acquires knowledge and wisdom. Many incarnations are required before the soul can acquire all the knowledge which the earth life can supply, and before it can dispense with its earth-school experiences. The process may be long and painful, but so are all the processes of evolution in nature. The pain, however, is only felt by the lower sense consciousness of man; it never reaches his inner soul, his real spiritual reincarnation ego.

According to the teachings of theosophy then, man possesses more chances than one. It teaches that a failure in this life does not necessarily seal his fate to an eternal destiny of woe. In the vast cycles of soul evolution, there is no room for a occasional lapse. The souls are few indeed who pursue their upward evolutionary career in an undeviating line; they who do this are the

gods of humanity. With the great majority of the race the evolutionary process is painfully slow; there are occasional backward lapses here and there, and their soul evolution is characterized by very deviating and irregular lines. Nevertheless, on the whole, the evolution of the race is upward, and when the process is complete, there will be no failure to mar the universal harmony. Down through the cycles of time the river of soul life winds its way back to the infinite ocean from which it took its origin. Like the river which flows to the sea; sometimes it takes a curve, sometimes it takes a backward sweep, sometimes it shoots straight ahead; many a rocky boulder obstructs its path, many a rocky chasm it dashes through, many a precipice it leaps; but ever as we listen to its murmur, we hear it say "The sea for me." Onward it goes, gathering rivulet after rivulet, and growing vaster and vaster in its volume, but as it rolls onward, there comes ever and anon the murmur, "The sea for me;" and as it sweeps into the bosom of the mighty ocean and mingles with its waters, it finds its resting place and realizes the burden of its song. And so it is with the human soul. Back to the infinite spiritual ocean it is wending its way; sometimes it takes a curve, sometimes it takes a backward sweep, sometimes it shoots straight ahead; many a difficulty besets its path, many a dark and narrow passage it dashes through, but as we listen, we hear it cry, "Christ for me." Onward it goes gathering experience after experience, and growing richer and richer in wisdom, but as it advances onward, the cry is ever and anon "Christ for me;" and as the soul sweeps onward through the pearly gates of the Nirvana of blessedness, and finds its resting place in the bosom of the Father, it realizes that through the union with the Christ,—the higher self alone,—can the river of life find its way back to the spiritual ocean of light and life from whence it took its origin.

In the doctrine of reincarnation then, theosophy presents to man the great law of soul evolution, the evolution of the divinity in man, and shows that this evolution is the ultimate goal and object of the whole cosmic process from the beginning to the end.

Theosophy conveys to science and theology a solution of one of their deepest problems. One of the greatest questions of evolutionary science to-day, is, where did man get his moral and rational nature? Materialistic ethics has endeavored to account for

it on the theory that it evolved from the lower animal nature, but this theory is admitted to be a failure by many of the leading lights of science,—notably by Huxley himself. Now, theology has always stated, that according to the origin of man, as described in Genesis, man received his divine or spiritual and moral nature from the spiritual side after his bodily form was completed; but theology has never been able to advance any science or philosophy on this subject, and has confined itself to the bald statement made in Genesis that God “breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Now, theosophy comes and supplies the science and philosophy of this whole progress. It teaches that at a certain point in the evolutionary career of the animal man upwards, man received an addition to his nature from the spiritual side; it teaches that there have been two evolutions,—a material evolution upward and a spiritual involution downward, and that the highest point in the ascending arc of material evolution met the lowest point in the descending arc of spiritual involution; and the contract produced the rational man, the thinker. The spiritual infusion which animal man received at this point made him human; it made him man. In this great revelation of the origin of man’s higher soul, theosophy effects a reconciliation between evolutionary science on the one hand and theology on the other, which theology itself has never been able to effect. Theosophy is, in fact, the only bulwark which spiritual philosophy possesses to-day which is impregnable to the assaults of materialistic science.

The great companion of reincarnation which theosophy brings to the western world, is the doctrine of Karma. This is the law of ethical causation, of absolute and universal justice. It is probably in this doctrine that orthodox theology comes into most pronounced contact with theosophy, so far as theology still holds to the doctrine of the vicarious atonement. In its scientific aspect the doctrine of Karma may be said to be law applied to ethics or morality. By ethics I mean the science of conduct, the ‘reason why’ of action. Some theosophists indeed say that the great mission of theosophy is the introduction of law into the domain of morality, the establishment of ethics upon a scientific basis. What is lacking to-day is an ethical philosophy to serve as a basis for the regulation of conduct. In the days when the orthodox

religion of the church controled the minds of men, ethics was based upon the will of God and the hope of future rewards and punishments. This being the case, it followed that the individuals or class who were supposed to interpret the will of God laid down in the laws of ethics, which is one reason for the predominating authority of the church in the middle ages. Ethics then was based upon an arbitrary external authority; to this external authority men were taught to bow in absolute submission; to question this authority was to risk what was called "damnation." Ethics then had a basis, such as it was, and before the modern scepticism and doubts of science entered, men were happy in their beliefs that their actions should be subject to and in accordance with the will of an almighty God, who made no scruples to visit with wrath and displeasure those who dared to disobey. To-day, however, the case is vastly different. The so-called divine basis of ethics has well nigh vanished. A stupendous change has come over the minds of men. This change is due to the introduction of the idea of law by science. It is now beginning to be realized that law holds good, not only in the world of nature which we see around us, but also in the actions and conduct of men, and that laws prevail in the moral and spiritual spheres as surely as they do in the physical. It is just as certain that evil actions will entail at sometime in the future results detrimental to the individual who commits them, as that a certain chemical compound made of the proper ingredients will explode under certain conditions. The moral law of retribution for evil actions and compensation for good ones operates in the spiritual sphere with as much mathematical precision as any physical law. The soul of man reaps exactly as it has sown. St. Paul recognized this when he said: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Our soul's present condition is the exact expression of our actions in the past. It is possible that the soul may not reap the result of its actions in one single lifetime. The sins which are upon our heads are the accumulated evil actions, desires and passions, not only of our present, but of our previous incarnations. These are the sins we are born into and inherit from the earthly man, the Adam, of previous lives; they are placed on the debit side of our ledger of life, while all the good we have done is passed to our credit; and Karma strikes the balance. Karma is the

great book-keeper, with whom every human being carries an account. We shall have to pay off ourselves every farthing of debt we owe to that great law. Our debts accumulate at a very rapid rate so long as we allow our animal nature to predominate, and it is only by a spiritual and unselfish life that we can hope to reduce the account.

Nations as well as individuals are also subject to the law of Karma. Read in the light of the law of Karma, the history of nations takes on a new meaning and aspect.

As Madam Blavatsky says in discussing the law of Karma: "It is only this doctrine, we say, that can explain to us the mysterious problems of good and evil, and reconcile men to the terrible *apparent* injustice of life. Nothing but such certainty can quiet our revolted sense of justice. For, when one unacquainted with the noble doctrine looks around him, and observes the inequalities of birth and fortune, of intellect and capacities; when one sees honor paid to fools and profligates, on whom fortune has heaped her favors by mere privilege of birth, and their nearest neighbor, with all his intellect and noble virtues—far more deserving in every way—perishing of want and for lack of sympathy; when one sees all this and has to turn away, helpless to relieve the undeserved suffering, one's ears ringing and heart aching with the cries of pain around him—that blessed knowledge of Karma alone prevents him from cursing life and men, as well as their supposed creator."

(To be Continued.)

THEOSOPHIC BROTHERHOOD.

We from time to time hear a good deal about Brotherhood. It seems to be the ethical idea of most men, and is most properly so. Priest and reformer alike preach it, and not only do most religions inculcate it, but also various societies have been instituted to promote it. Hence it may well be asked, what need is there for a Theosophical Society to re-assert it? To this it may be replied that there are one or two strong reasons which justify the existence of the Theosophical Society as an association, whose bond of union is neither pledge nor creed, neither obligation nor dogma, but simply an ethical idea of Brotherhood; and whose

fundamental and first object is to help mankind to a practical realization of what is in too many cases a mere dead-letter belief, not a living incarnation. Those reasons I will presently lay before you.

To my mind, perhaps, the most charming thing in Theosophy is its teaching on that much talked of but little understood subject, "Universal Human Brotherhood." Christianity invites you with open arms to become a brother: But unless you join the church and support the minister you cannot be a brother. Mahommedanism is ready with fire and sword to terrorize you into becoming a brother: But unless you become a follower of its prophet you cannot be one. The Revolutionist and men of that sort come and say, "Be our brother, but—think and act as we do or we will cut off your head." The kind of brotherhood resulting from our modern civilization may be seen in the military system of the present day; when each nation maintains a monstrous army or navy to secure itself from a surprise visit from its brothers beyond the frontier. The kind of brotherhood resulting from our modern civilization may also be seen—and bitterly felt, too—in the great competitive system under which we civilians live and fret and slave and die. Granted that great reformers in all ages have praised and preached brotherhood; granted that all religions have taught it in their peculiar and limited ways; granted that a variety of societies have inculcated it in their especial manner; granted that human brotherhood is no new teaching: But the state of the world at large is a proof that it must be taught in some new and better way if it is at all to prevail in our—at present—unbrotherly world. And now comes Theosophy to teach it in a new and better way. Theosophy may be said to teach the same thing, but with a difference—and what a difference! Reformers and preachers hitherto have been content to say, "Act like brothers! Be brotherly," and the like. "If you do not, most unbrotherly treatment shall be meted out to you." But Theosophy points to a grand fact in Nature, to a prime principle embedded in the very constitution of the Universe, and then says, "You are brothers! Whether you know it or not, you are brothers! And the sooner you consciously and voluntarily act as such, the better for yourselves, as well as for others." There is no threat. Theosophy is too compassionate to do other than pity

human sorrow and pardon human folly. It only adds, "If you do not, you delay the bliss which is freely yours, and only waiting and longing to bless you" As experience proves, no doctrine, or dogma, or obligation, however solemn, is a sufficient basis for brotherhood. Theosophy, therefore, teaches it as based on a real substantial fact in Nature, and resting on a law of the Universe, which by all who attain a certain level of intelligence is bound to be recognized, accepted and obeyed. Some time the omnipotent forces of Nature are steadily engaged in the work of impressing this truth into each human being and enforcing its recognition and observance. So far as it is recognized, there is harmony. Whenever there is any departure from it, there is suffering. This is in truth a grand and impressive idea, and it may well be inquired how may this fact and this law be proved. To fully explain and demonstrate it would require a greater dip than we can at present make into—Occultism, which is the inner side and soul of Theosophy. But for popular teachings, the new departure, which Theosophy makes in inculcating Universal Human Brotherhood, may be briefly indicated as resting in its teaching respecting the Godhead as being the Higher Self of each one of us, and in its application of the twin truths of Reincarnation and Karma.

Theosophy bases our brotherhood on the Oneness of the Divine Element dwelling within us, and to which we owe our being. Theosophy does not merely state this in general terms, as do religious and other teachers. But it proceeds to emphasize the principle of brotherhood more forcibly than any religion or other fraternity has yet done, by a fuller explanation of the human constitution. It gives us a profound analysis of human nature, which if fairly well understood will give you a deeper and truer insight into the characters of those around you than all the phrenologies and physiognomics ever invented. It presents human nature to our study as a system of seven principles, of which the seventh or highest is Divine; and that seventh principle is not only Divine, but is identically the same in each and every individual. Thus, the Higher Self of every human being is the one Divine Father of us all. As rays from the sun, all spirits—all units of consciousness—flame forth from the Great Mind, the Divine mind, who is the Spiritual Son of the Universe, and the primeval Source of all consciousness. In Him is the Source of their being.

He is the Central Fire whereof all lesser intelligences are sparks. Hence we are all rays of the one Universal Spirit, all alike striving to rise out of the bonds of matter into which we have descended, and to return to our one Divine Source, enriched by our experience, and thereby raised to a higher place of consciousness. Hence subsists among us, whether we as yet consciously recognize it or not, the close union which springs from a common origin and common destiny. We, finite as we seem to be, are all parts of one infinite Whole. This teaching of our Divine origin and Divine Destiny, and of the Divine basis underlying and subtending the nature of each one of us, helps us to intellectually realize the bonds which unite us. The realization of this unity of origin will enable us to see the Supreme Soul pervading all things as space pervades all things. It will also enable us to see all things contained in the Supreme Soul as the air and ether is contained in space. Thus will the sense of separateness be destroyed, and the One—the Divine One—be recognized in the All. Then, again, the teaching of Reincarnation and Karma tends to develop the sense and the feeling of brotherhood, and will constrain us more powerfully than any other motive to a hearty and sincere fraternal course of conduct. It tends to draw us very close to each other, and to evoke our deepest sympathy.

Reincarnation signifies plurality of existences, or rather a long continuity of existence in alternate periods of objective and physical and subjective and spiritual life. Karma means perfect justice in active operation throughout the whole series of successive lives. The one supplies the necessary field and scope for experience; the other supplies the necessary adjustment of condition according to desert. The Theosophic teaching is that each indestructible spirit—each human unit of consciousness—after temporary but happy periods of rest in spiritual realms, in close association with the one Divine Higher Self, emerges again and again into physical life, each time it may be into a different race family and condition, until it has lived maybe a thousand lives, and run through the whole gamut of human experience. On each occasion of its re-emergence into physical life, the partial body, material casing and outward condition which the spirit finds awaiting it, are determined by its Karma—that is, the natural consequence of its actions, good or bad, in previous incarnations. Infallible justice

rules the universe; and what a man deserves, that in due time he gets. Character determines destiny, and present conduct forms the future body, the future environment and future life. Whenever we note any sign of suffering, the thought that it is the result of some wrong done in the past, and that we ourselves may have been, or may still have to be under similar or, perchance, worse conditions, is likely to elicit our gentlest and tenderest sympathy. The natural effect of this prolonged experience is to develop the sense of brotherhood. Suffering awakens consciousness, and community of suffering awakens sympathy and compassion. A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind. Those who are not yet touched with this fellow-feeling are still at a low grade of development. Those who are still selfish are only at the foot of the hill; they are still on the lower rung of the ladder of evolution, still at the base of the long ascent in spiritual development, whose upward cycle is still in front of them. Those to whom vice is pleasure, or virtue is pain, are still novices in both.

Further experience—it may, or may not be bitter, that depends on the readiness with which its lessons are accepted—will eventually teach them the true value of each; and at last convince the hardest-headed and hardest-hearted that nothing is better than brotherhood, nothing nobler than altruism, nothing diviner than compassion. In these two broad principals, the influence of the Divinity within and the discipline of Karma without, lies the immense moral motive power of Theosophy. A realization of them would make us lead a very different kind of life from what we too often see in the world around us. Our usual selfishness would be transfigured into the noblest forms of altruism; our brotherhood would be not merely theoretical, but practical. In truth the world is sorely in need of more practical brotherhood. When we read or think, or see something of the mass of misery in the world—aye, even the suffering and trouble in our own little corner of it—we cannot but feel deep shame that so little has been accomplished for its relief, although brotherhood has been preached to humanity for so many ages. It is high time that the methods of preaching it should be altered; and herein is the golden opportunity for its inculcation by Theosophy, with its enobling views of human nature, and of the training influence of

Karma. And in truth, what an enobling view of human nature is this theosophic teaching of the One Divine Lord of all being, the Higher Self of each individual. It leads us to look on our fellowman as an undeveloped angel, as in a sense a divine incarnation, as in truth, another son of God. Further, what grandeur the twin ideas of reincarnation impart to human existence. The field of our life is not a little paddock of seventy years, but a continent of ages. Our platform is not the temporary table of an evening, but a stage whose limits are obscure in the depths of past and future eternity. We are not mere ephemera of a day, or the insects of a generation, but immortals of divine origin, who don innumerable bodies in innumerable environments as the temporary clothing of successive existences. What man is there to whom the conviction of the reality of these sublime truths once comes but will feel inspired with ever new energy, and will strive his utmost, not only to improve himself, but also—so far as maybe—to improve the world, into which he is destined again and again to reappear?

Individually, we may be able to do but little, yet this we may each do. We can allow in ourselves only such thoughts, words and deeds as are pure and unselfish. So doing we shall help to create a better and purer atmosphere, and so make it less difficult for others to rise to higher moral levels than those they at present occupy. If we each do all we can we may perhaps help humanity far more than we at present think. At the least we may in our daily life avail ourselves of every opportunity of practising brotherhood. We can show tolerance to those of our "other selves" who see a different side of the truth from what we do. And we can exercise a constant gentleness and avoid feeling anger or impatience towards the faults and failings of others, even though we ourselves suffer from them. We shall do well to realize that we are all striving to climb the same steep road to the snowy heights of perfection; that we (all of us) continually stumble and fall; that we are all fundamentally one, having the same divine Higher Self within; and that we shall at last, however devious the intervening pilgrimage may be, all meet in perfect harmony at the end of the arduous road. The sooner we realize all this the better for our own happiness, as well as that of our brethren.

After all, is it not a sublime idea? This theosophic teaching, that universal human brotherhood is an integral law of the universe steadily engaged in developing the sense of it in each human being. Just as certainly as timekeeping is the law of the timepiece, the very object of its being, be it a watch or a clock, and as certainly as a timepiece is a mechanism specially constructed for the measurement of time; just as certainly is universal human brotherhood the law of the universe, and the whole universe a mechanism, or rather a living organism, specially constituted for the gradual but eventually effective inculcation and enforcement of that law. That being so—though the wheels of God move slowly, and though the cycles of evolution are majestic in their onward sweep—yet we rest assured, since it is the principle of the Kosmos, that the gradual unfoldment of Nature will ultimately translate into a glorious reality, the at present beautiful dream of universal human brotherhood.

T. S. ECHOES.

THE COUNTESS WACHTMEISTER'S MONTHLY LETTER.

My last letter was written from Washington, D. C. My next point was Baltimore, where arrangements were made as to future work, and from there to Philadelphia, where I had the pleasure of attending the Branch Meetings, and talked over with the members the possibilities of future work in the winter. In New York which was finally reached I had a busy time. Three public lectures, several Branch meetings, many parlor talks, as well as receiving the many visitors who came to the hotel to see me. Mr. Charles Elley Hall, a prominent member here, most kindly relieved me of the business arrangements in connection with my lectures, and it was, I am confident, largely due to his affective work, that Walton Hall, which Dr. Alfred Walton had generously placed at my disposal, was well filled on all three evenings of my lectures. Dr. Walton, while not attaching himself to any especial cult, is continually giving help and encouragement to all who are working along the lines of advanced liberal thought. He is at present giving much attention to his plans for a Summer School of Philosophy which he hopes to found in the vicinity of New York. His ideas of the character of this Institution are on a much wider basis than anything of this sort heretofore attempted and are certainly unique.

I visited Hoboken, Newark and Brooklyn lecturing and giving parlor meetings in each place, and renewed activity among the members has been the outcome of the work.

On the second of November I arrived in Boston. I am the guest here of

Mrs. Bertha Sythes, corresponding Secretary of the Branch, who also kindly accompanies me everywhere and is rendering me much assistance in the arrangements for my lectures and meetings.

Five lectures are to be given in the Procopeia Club to the members of that Society. Three public lectures in Paine Memorial Hall, Branch Meetings and lectures in the Suburban towns, also parlor talks are being arranged for and I am looking forward to a very active month and trust effective work may be done.

Boston fairly bristles with lecturers and lectures with metaphysical and literary societies and all this sort of thing! The brightest minds and most advanced thought seem to congregate in this very intellectual city, and so, out of the many who are called, the few are chosen. Dr. Nansen, the active explorer, has been the great attraction of the week, and thousands of the people here have gathered to hear him. Prince Krapotkin, the Russian Anarchist is also here and has attracted immense audiences.

Before closing I should like to say a few words in appreciation of all the kindness shown me by the general Secretary of your Section, Mr. Alexander Fullerton, when in New York. Constant consideration and thoughtfulness, seems to flow from his genial nature, and overworked as he is in the manifold cares and duties of his office, his helpfulness extends over a wide area outside these. Long may he be with us.

CONSTANCE WACHTMEISTER.

REPORTS OF BRANCHES.

PHILADELPHIA, PA., OCT. 29—"The opening of the Fall Term of meetings of the "Mânâsa T. S." was made noteworthy by reason of the presence of the Countess Wachtmeister, who gave us aid in forming a plan of propaganda work, which was to the effect that we send requests to the editors of newspapers of various towns in this vicinity that they print notices for all interested in Theosophy to send their addresses to the secretary, which plan the branch has decided to follow. All meetings of the branch will in future be held at 1512 Arch Street. Membership is slowly increasing. The Countess Wachtmeister reports that she will probably give several lectures here this winter."

W. I. SHORE, SEC'Y.

CHICAGO, ILL., NOV. 10—"There is very little to chronicle for these past few weeks. The principal point of interest to us lies in our increased membership. This list runs up to ninety-two at present and we are hoping for at least eight more by December first. Then the weekly meetings are very well attended which is also encouraging. We have been a little unfortunate in arranging the Sunday night meetings and as yet they have not become regular although it is really necessary that we should have a good lecture arranged for each Sunday night during the winter. It is to be hoped that a regular program may be decided upon by the first of the coming month. On the twenty-second of October, the Chicago Branch gave its first reception for the season of '97-'98. There was a short musical and literary program. Light refreshments were served and the few hours most pleasantly passed in social intercourse. We have two visitors of late, both members of Petrovna Branch, Boston, Miss Helen Petter and Mr. Jehangur D. Cola of Bombay. The annual meeting of the Chicago Branch will be held Wednesday evening, December first. This meeting is always looked forward to with great interest. The election of officers for the ensuing

year, reports of outgoing incumbents, committees, etc. etc., are appointed and once a year at least we know where we stand from a practical point of view. And next month's letter will tell you all the news. P. G. K.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., Nov. 7th.—During Mrs. Besant's visit here on April 2nd, she organized the MERCURY BRANCH with ten charter members, since then we have been making fair progress. On Wednesday October the 27th we held our first public meeting at which Countess Wachtmeister kindly presided, the lecture was well attended and all were exceedingly interested. The Countess, on Thursday afternoon met those who were desirous of making inquiries concerning our philosophy and a very pleasant and profitable afternoon was spent. We still hold weekly meetings for study and feel that additions to our group will soon follow. We have earnest workers with us who desire to aid in the carrying out of the objects of our Society.

ELLEN H. HENDRICKSON, Sec'y.

KANSAS CITY, Nov. 15th.—On the 14th instant we organized here a Branch of the Theosophical Society with the due quota of members and somewhat more. This good fortune is very largely due to the earnest and sole effort of Dr. Mary Weeks Burnett of Chicago, who has been with us several days, giving private talks, answering questions, etc. at the homes of members and at the Savoy Hotel where she went on arriving, not having any acquaintances here. The Branch will meet weekly at first at the homes of members and we are at once to take up the study of *The "Ancient Wisdom"* by Annie Besant. M. HOWLAND.

NEW ZEALAND SECTION, Oct. 30th.—Col. Olcott's lectures were fairly successful in Auckland. He lectured first on "The Divine Art of Healing," on October the 3rd. and on the 8th the lecture was repeated and continued. On the 10th his subject was "Spiritualism," and it drew an interested audiences of over a thousand people. Several "At Homes" and receptions were given by members in Auckland in honor of the visitor and were very successful as were also the meetings for enquirers, several new members having joined the Society. During his Australasian tour the President Founder has been arranging plans with a view to, if possible, utilize the services of Miss Lilian Edger in both the Australian and New Zealand Sections of the T. S. He brought the matter before all Branches with the result that the project received unanimous approval and on the 7th instant Miss Edger tendered her resignation as General Secretary of the New Zealand Section, in order to take up such new duties as the President may arrange. The appointment of her successor was left in the hands of the Executive Committee with the result that Mr C. W. Sanders was chosen to fill the office for which he is in every way a most suitable man. Meanwhile Miss Edger proceeds to India to attend the Annual Convention of the Society at Madras and deliver the Convention lectures there. The President left Auckland for Sydney on October the 12th, Miss Edger followed on October 18th having delivered a lecture in the Auckland Branch Rooms on the 17th. on a General Outline of Theosophy. It has been decided to hold the Second Annual Convention of the New Zealand Section in Auckland on January 3rd, and 4th, 1898.

TORONTO, CANADA.—On the 22nd of October Toronto T. S. invited the public to "An evening with Plato." Papers were read discussing his merits and teachings as a political economist, historian and philosopher. The papers of Mr. Fox (Atlantis) and Mr. Belcher (Plato's Ideal Republic) deserve special mention. In addition there was a very attractive musical program. Nearly the whole of the evening's entertainment was furnished by members recently admitted and showed that we have added talent of a high order. A more than usually interesting Sunday evening meeting was that held on November 7th. Two weeks prior to that date the subject of address was "Materialism." Mr. J. S. Ellis, the editor of *Secular Thought*, a newspaper published in this city, who was present at that meeting intimated a desire to present his views on that subject at a meeting of our Society. The opportunity he sought was given him on the night mentioned. He chose as his subject "Mind and Matter, or Why I am a Materialist." One of our members followed him, showing the weakness of the Materialistic position. The hall was crowded and the audience extended into the adjoining corridors. Many expressed the hope that the discussion might be repeated or continued in a larger hall. F. E. Titus.

TOPEKA, KANSAS, Nov. 18th.—We are much pleased to report that through the efforts of Dr. Mary Weeks Burnett the Topeka Branch has had a revival adding eight new members to its roll and interesting a number of others who will no doubt join us in time. Dr. Burnett won all hearts by her beautiful character and her desire to impart to all inquiring souls the truths which she had learned. Regular meetings are held each Wednesday afternoon, to which members are privileged to invite friends who may be interested. "*Ancient Wisdom*" and the Outlines of Study are used in our class, and we feel that when we have thoroughly mastered the principles of that book we shall be worthy to be called Theosophists. The November *MERCURY* is a most interesting and profitable copy. "Man and His Vehicles" throws much light upon our study of the Physical and Astral Planes. The portrait of Mr. Fullerton, the faithful secretary is very acceptable also. The "Forum Department" is an excellent addition to the Magazine and our Branch will not fail to make use of it. ELIZABETH MURRAY WARDALL, Sec'y.

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 20.—Since returning to the headquarters formerly occupied by the Lodge the members of Harmony Branch feel much encouraged by the interest displayed in the Sunday evening meetings which of late had not been so well attended. During this month Mr. J. H. M. Lapsley lectured on Hypnotism, Liddi Mohammed Ta'eiber on "Our Finer Forces" and Mrs. Cheney on "Spencer and Oriental Thought." Mrs. Cheney is quite a student of oriental philosophy and her lecture was wonderfully interesting and instructive. Last Friday evening a "book social" was held under the auspices of the ladies of the Lodge who provided a most enjoyable program consisting of musical and literary selections. A piano loaned to the Lodge by one of the members proves a delightful source of entertainment. A syllabus of lecture has been prepared which extends into the new year. Mrs. Besant's book, "*The Ancient Wisdom*" has been received with a card from Miss Willson, announcing that it was sent by Mrs. Besant to each branch in America as a memento of her trip. Next Sunday evening we are to have the pleasure of listening to a lecture from Mr. Will C. Bailey of San Francisco, on "Waves, Spirals and Vibrations."

THE SCANDINAVIAN SECTION of the T. S. held a meeting on the 19th of September to consider a plan of work for the current year. On October the 24th, the section held a public meeting at the Agricultural Academy. Dr. Emil Zander read a translation of Mrs. Besant's lecture on "Hinduism," the first of the four series on "The Four Great Religions," the hall was filled with a greatly interested audience. The Stockholm Lodge had a meeting on the 12th of September where the president lectured on "Right and Wrong," and Major Rinell read a translation of Mrs. Besant's lecture, "The Object of the T. S." which was followed by a short discussion. On the 10th of October the Lodge had another meeting when a resolution was passed that the three lodges, the Stockholm, Orion and Ajax were to hold their meetings in common. The president delivered a lecture on "The Eleusinian Mysteries." The Gothenburg Lodge had two private meetings in September to agree upon a system of work for the year. On September 25th and October 9th, the lodge held an open meeting at which Miss B. Westerlund read a translation of Mrs. Besant's article "Brotherhood True and False," and Mrs. Sjoster an essay by Mr. Leadbeater, called "The Akâsic Records." A public lecture was given on October 8th, Mrs. Sjoster read a translation of "An Introduction to Theosophy," by Mrs. A. Besant. The lecture was attended by upwards of two hundred persons. A new lodge consisting of sixteen members has been formed at Luleå, its president is Mr. Sven Nillson, well known for the ardent zeal with which he works for theosophy. The lodge is called "Befrost," a name our ancestors gave the rainbow which they looked upon as a bridge from "Valhall" to the earth, from the realm of light to the world of illusions; an allegory of the same idea is found in the Bible when Jehovah after the deluge made a covenant with man and as a pledge of which he placed the rainbow in the sky—a symbol of the relation between our higher and lower self—as long as this bridge exists man is not quite lost in the sea of illusions. The lodge has a meeting every other Saturday for members and one each month to which non-members are admitted.

Mrs. M Westerlund,

HONOLULU, H. I., Nov.—The last steamer brought news from our brother Dr. A. Marques who arrived there a few weeks ago. The local newspapers gave good interviews with him, on his arrival, the result being that much interest is again aroused in Theosophy. Three or four classes are held weekly and the library is taxed to its utmost capacity. The Lodge has taken up the study of Mrs. Besant's new work the "Ancient Wisdom." W.

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., Dec. 7.—During the month of November, Golden Gate Lodge has continued its usual activity. At the regular branch meeting on Wednesday evening the interest has been sustained in the study of the Physical Plane as issued by the Chicago committee. The following Sunday evening lectures have been given. "Nature's Finer Forces," by Miss M. A. Walsh; "The Course of Discontent," by Mrs. Alice Best; "Theosophy and Social Reforms," by Miss M. A. Walsh; a symposium by the members of the branch; "The Atom," by Dr. Brackett. Public classes are held at headquarters on Tuesday and on Thursday afternoons, to accommodate those who can not come out in the evening and also a class on Friday evening for those who do not find it convenient to attend the Sunday evening lectures. The Library and reading rooms are open daily from 1 to 4 P. M. and interest many visitors.

Nov. 23d, 1896

To THE EDITOR OF *Mercury*:

I greatly desire to have you give space to the following Official Notice from the President-Founder. It has present importance, and that importance will continually augment. Perhaps I may add that I am the more gratified at it because it affirms the position I have myself taken since the moral elements in the matter became so pronounced and the obligation of discrimination by the T. S. so imperative. That the Society should welcome the dumping back into itself of any evil or foulness from which it has happily been purged, would seem a policy both wrong and suicidal. The President's decision empowers us to protect ourselves by wise discrimination.

ALEXANDER FULLERTON, Gen. Sec'y.

Executive Notice.

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, AUCKLAND, N. Z.

October 9th, 1897.

The following official letter has been received:

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, NEW ZEALAND SECTION,

GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE,

October 7th, 1897.

The President-Founder, Theosophical Society.

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:

Will you be so good as to give me some definite official instruction as to what course is to be pursued in the following cases.

1. If any persons who have seceded from the Theosophical Society and joined the society known as "The Theosophical Society in America," should apply for readmission to the Theosophical Society through the officials of any Branch?

2. If such persons should be rejected by a Branch on their application to be admitted to its membership, and then should apply for admission to the Society as unattached members?

3. If such persons should apply for admission as unattached members without having first applied for admission to any Branch?

I am Yours Fraternally, (Sd.) Lilian Edger, Gen. Sec'y.

My decision is that the policy outlined in a Presidential letter of 1897 to the General Secretary of the American Section T. S. about the same subject still commends itself to my best judgement. I repeat what I then said, that: "My policy is to make it as easy for them to come back as I did to let them go out. I want no tyranny, no compulsion, or red tape, I want to abstain from anything like censoriousness or abuse, to keep always the even mind of the believer in Karma, thus abstaining from widening the breach and making it hard for people to resume their places in our ranks." In saying this I had no idea of making it appear that in deciding as to the readmission to membership the question of personal character need not be considered. On the contrary, I think it is a matter of vital importance, and Sections should not revive diplomas or charters, nor Branches readmit to their membership any ex-member who since its secession has shown such a malevolent spirit, disregard of truth or other lack of moral principle as, if known of him or her originally, would have prevented his or her admission to membership on first applying. The same test is needed as to fresh applicants. Only thus can the harmony of the Society be sustained and its prosperity be made sure. H. S. Olcott,

President Theosophical Society.

To the Gen. Sec., American Sec. T. S.

BOOK REVIEWS.

The Living Christ, by Paul Tyner, Price \$1.00, TEMPLE PUBLISHING Co., Denver, Col. This book is in reality a work on the possibility of bodily immortality through oneness with God. "Death is to be conquered by raising the physical body into higher life." The writer basis his theory, or as he calls it his discovery, on the fact of the continued existence of Jesus the perfected Man in his resurrected body. Jesus is the Master, the Living Christ seen by the writer enthroned in the invisible world and from thence guiding the destinies of this world. The book is full of beautiful thoughts and helpful suggestions for the conduct of life. M.

The Theosophical Review for November discusses "On the Watch Tower," "Home Life in India," "Swâmi Vivekananda," Suspension of Borderland," Life in Metals," "Experiments with Mescalbuttons," "Lion and Lamb." From this paragraph we quote the following remarkable passage, "Gradually the various religions will learn this lesson of the difference between the letter that killeth and the spirit that giveth life. They will see that their strength rests on the power of "a living Christ" not on the date of a manuscript or the accuracy of a historical tradition. And this in two ways; first, in the continued accessibility of Jesus the Adept, a fact witnessed by the saints and mystics of the Christian Church as well as by some Theosophists; secondly, in the all pervasive power of "the Christ," the Son of the Father, in every child of man." "The Forgiveness of Sins" by Annie Besant, "The Brotherhood of Humanity" by Herbert Burrows are excellent articles for Branch Study. They are words for the needs of the hour. "The Wisdom Myth of the Gnostics," by G. R. S. Mead (continued), "Theosophy and the Problems of Life" by A. P. Sinnett, "Where Brahman and Buddhist Meet" by J. C. Chattopâdhyâya, "The Longing for Liberation" by Bertram Keightley, "Mysticism and Catholicism," "The Christian Creed, "Incidents in the Life of St. Germain" make up a number of rare value interest and helpfulness.

Lotus Bleu, October.—The first installment of Mr. Leadbeater's "Devachan" opens this number. "Some Reflections on the Principles of Chinese Philosophy," by Aniketa. The leading original article is "A Theosophic Explanation of the Phenomena of Hypnotism and Magnetism," by Dr. Pascal. The writer with his usual clearness. breath of view, intuitive perception, and aided by the extensive investigations of the French Schools of hypnotism explains most happily the process and results of hypnotism and magnetism and makes clear the difference between them. The Question Department discusses the utility of studying the Kabala and the Theosophic conception of love. "Light on the Path" and "Old Diary Leaves" are continued.

Sophia,—for November is of much interest. "Genesis" by Senor Soria y Mata is continued. The third of a series of "Letters to a Catholic Priest" by Mr. A. A. Wells, contains excellent arguments on the subject, why Christianity fails to appeal to the "slums" population of the world. Filadelfo under Historical Varieties continues his discourse on the Evolution of the Jews. He moralizes on the constitution of the Decalogue forming the basis of social laws. "Reincarnation" by Mrs. Besant, continues. A. H. T.

Theosophy in Australasia, October.—The outlook is bright and encouraging. H. A. W. gives a clear logical explanation of the world in his paper on "The Continuity of Consciousness." Ecstasia by W. A. M. is concluded. Questions and Answers, Activities and notes conclude a very interesting number.

Mind,—A monthly magazine edited by John Emery McLean, New York, another periodical devoted to Psychology, Metaphysics and Occultism. We note among its contributors for November the following well known writers: C. Staniland Wake, Charles Brodie Patterson, W. J. Colville and Julian Hawthorne. It ought to succeed.

The Dawn, September, begins with a very interesting article on "A Modern Error" with regard to the Hindu Doctrines of Love. The other articles are "Brindavana Scenes," "A Fellowship in aid of Hindu Religious Learning and Research," "The Progress of Soul," "A Strange Case of Double Personality," "Living Sages of India."

The Temple, TEMPLE PUBLISHING CO., DENVER COLO.—The November number contains a beautifully written scientific sermon on "Ye are the Temple of God." I Cor. III, 16, "Thinking all Over," is the title which means that the whole body and not the brain and heart alone, is the temple of the Living God.

Self Knowledge, November, is taking a bold step in the right direction. We are however, surprised to learn that "Theosophy is Buddhism." Our brother's ideas of our clear and simple philosophy are "exceedingly foggy."


The Brahmavadin, October, contains an editorial on "The Sankhya Categories." Among other interesting papers is a summary of one of the Swami Saradânanda's lectures at Greenacre, taken from the Boston Evening Transcript.

The Arya Bala Bodhini, September.—This modest little monthly contains a very good story on the subject of Sanctity of Marriage by B. S. Raghutama Charya. Among the book reviews we find an extended notice of Practical Vegetarian Cookery by the Countess Wachtmeister, and Mrs Kate Buffington Davis, as a Brahmin the reviewer, objects to the use of onions and eggs and hopes that these objectionable elements will be dropped from the second edition.

Received,—*"Intelligence," "The World's Advanced Thought," "The Philosophical Journal," "Arjuna," "Teosofisk Tidskrift," "Chicago Vegetarian," "The Vahan," "The Theosophic Gleaner,"* which with the September number completes its seventh year. *"The Theosophist"* for November had not been received up to the time of going to press.

THE FORUM DEPARTMENT.

QUESTIONS TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE NEXT AND SUBSEQUENT
ISSUES OF THE FORUM.

 Answers should be sent in as soon as possible.

1. *In many Theosophical writings I find statements somewhat as follows: With the physical and moral decline of races come atmospheric disturbances and terrestrial cataclysms, while (without being able to satisfactorily say why) I believe this to be the case, I should like an occult explanation showing how this is brought about.*

2. *The seeming inequalities of human life are, according to the exponents of Karma, the results of previous lives; pleasure and pain in one incarnation being merely effects of causes generated in another. Animals, we are told, do not make Karma, yet we see them existing under similar diversified conditions, some starved and beaten, others pampered and admired.*

In the case of human beings we submit to an inevitable law which bears the stamp of reason and justice, but how can we reconcile the sufferings of animals with the idea of a presiding intelligence whose chief attributes are mercy and justice?.

3. *Is there a decrease in weight of matter as it rises in the scale of evolution, e. g., are vegetables as a class lighter than the same bulk of mineral, animals lighter than vegetable, man lighter than the Lower animals, and the more highly developed intellectual man lighter than his less advanced brother? If there is any relation between the weight of a body and the consciousness which animates it, what are the accompanying differences of chemical composition, and why?*

4. *At a recent meeting of our branch we had under consideration the 7th Manuel "Man and his Bodies". On page 14, it is held that—at one time during the long past physical Evolution during which our bodies were built, this system (the Systematic System) was under the control of the animal possessing it, but gradually it began to work automatically, it passed away from the Control of the will, took on its own quasi independence and continued on all the normal vital activities of the body.*

Now this proposition is seriously questioned by a member in our Branch. Will you further elucidate this proposition that we may have all the light available.